

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 0673

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, BG
SUBJ: ELEMENTS OF ZIA'S POLITICAL STRATEGY: WILL HE WORK
WITH MUSHTAQUE?

REF: A) DACCA 0526; B) DACCA 0620

1. INCLUDED AMONG THOSE POLITICIANS WHO HAVE MET
RECENTLY WITH PRESIDENT ZIA TO DISCUSS THE PROSPECTS FOR
A POLITICAL FRONT ARE A HANDFUL OF ERSTWHILE DEMOCRATIC
LEAGUERS, WHOSE PARTY WAS OFFICIALLY BANNED FOLLOWING
THE ATTEMPTED COUP OF OCTOBER 2, 1977. THE FORMER
DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE POLITICIANS, INCLUDING PROMINENT LEADERS
FROM THE MUJIB ERA SUCH AS FORMER STATE MINISTER
K.M. OBAIDUR RAHMAN (WITH WHOM POLOFF TALKED AT LENGTH
JANUARY 31) AND FORMER PRESIDENT MOHAMMADULLAH, WERE IN
FACT SUMMONED LAST WEEK BY ZIA TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY
OF ORGANIZING A NEW PARTY. WHILE ZIA HAS BEEN DISCUSSING
THIS TOPIC (INCLUDING THE FORMATION OF A FRONT) WITH MANY
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OTHER POLITICIANS RECENTLY, THE FORMER DEMOCRATIC LEAGUERS
ARE WILLING, UNLIKE OTHERS, TO WORK CLOSELY WITH ZIA PROVIDED
HE ACCEPTS CERTAIN CONDITIONS.

2. THE PRIMARY CONDITION FOR AN ALLIANCE WITH THE DEMOCRATIC
LEAGUERS, SAID OBAIDUR RAHMAN, IS THE RELEASE OF KHANDAKAR
MUSHTAQUE AHMED, ARRESTED BY ZIA IN NOVEMBER, 1976, AND

CONVICTED LAST SPRING OF CORRUPTION WHILE HE WAS COMMERCE MINISTER UNDER MUJIB. ZIA IS REPORTEDLY WILLING TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY OF MUSHTAQUE'S RELEASE IF MUSHTAQUE IN TURN WILL UNOFFICIALLY ZUPPORT ZIA IN A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION LATE IN THE SPRING. DETAILS OF SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT HAVE BE COMMUNICATED TO MUSHTAQUE IN RAJSHAHI CENTRAL JAIL, WHERE HE HAS BEEN HELD SINCE MID OCTOBER. MUSHTAQUE IS APPARENTLY WILLING TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITHOUT MAKING ANY COMMITMENT AT THE MOMENT.

3. IN POLITICAL TOUR D'HORIZON BETWEEN NATIONAL SECURITY INTELLIGENCE DIRGEN AND POLCOUNSELOR FEBRUARY 1, FORMER RAISED POSSIBILITY OF MUSHTAQUE'S RELEASE AND WONDERED IF HE WOULD BE WILLING TO ASSOCIATE WITH ZIA. ENSUING DISCUSSION LEFT TWO POINTS UNANSWERED. (A) MEANS OF OVERTURNING TWO CONVICTIONS MUST BE FOUND. PARDON PRESUMABLY WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO MUSHTAQUE AS THAT WOULD LEAVE STANDING GUILTY VERDICTS AND EXCUSE HIM ONLY FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONVICTIONS. LEAVE TO APPEAL MIGHT BE GRANTED BUT THIS RUNS THE RISK OF A HIGHER COURT UPHOLDING THE VERDICT. (B) IT IS POSSIBLE THAT GAP BETWEEN ZIA AND MUSHTAQUE IS NOW UNBRIDGABLE FOLLOWING ZIA'S BEHAVIOR TOWARD FORMER PRESIDENT SINCE NOVEMBER, 1976, ALTHOUGH OBAIDUR RAHMAN'S COMMENTS ABOVE SEEM TO INDICATE THIS MAY NOT BE THE CASE.

4. COMMENT: THERE ARE COMPELLING POLITICAL REASONS FOR MUSHTAQUE AND ZIA TO REACH AN UNDERSTANDING. THEIR COMMON ENEMY IS CONFIDENTIAL

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THE AWAMI LEAGUE, WHICH RETAINS CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND WHICH COULD MOUNT A SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO ZIA IN ELECTIONS TO A REPRESENTATIVE BODY. IF THE AWAMI LEAGUE EVER RETURNED TO POWER, MUSHTAQUE'S PROSPECTS MIGHT BE WORTH LITTLE. AN UNOFFICIAL ALLIANCE WITH ZIA AND RELEASE FROM JAIL WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO HIM. THROUGH MUSHTAQUE'S INFLUENCE, CONSIDERABLE MODERATE SUPPORT MIGHT MORE EASILY COME TO ZIA, BUT MORE IMPORTANT, ZIA NEEDS THE SEASONED POLS WHO SUPPORT MUSHTAQUE TO ORGANIZE THE VILLAGES. UNTIL NOW, ZIA HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO SECURE MUCH SUPPORT FROM ANY OTHER SOURCE. BERGESEN

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